

WHEN CRABBE RESTED.

THE LONG INTERVAL IN WHICH HE PRODUCED NO VERSE.

His Best Poetry Appeared When He Was Past Middle Life—His Unfortunate Remove—How He Suffered as the End of His Life Drew Near.

With the publication of "The Newspaper," issued in 1785, while at Strathern, Crabbe suspended his poetical labors, and produced no more verse till 1809, when his Parish Register appeared. His other principal works, of the earlier period and commendation of Burke and Johnson. These and others of his friends were now gone; and their absence, and the increase of parochial and domestic cares, may have had something to do with this interruption of poetic pursuits. But during all these years he was acquiring poetic material, and ripening his powers for still stronger work. He was past middle life when "The Borough" and "The Parish Register" were published, which contain his best poetry; and when, in 1819, the "Tales of the Hall" were published, he had reached the age of sixty-five. These were given to a new public, and drew around him another school of critical admirers. He, who had begun with Burke and Johnson, had lived, by new original, and still more powerful verse, to acquire the suffrages of Fox, and Scott, and Byron, and a bright company of the literary men of that time; and to tuck into his waistcoat pocket, out of the hand of John Murray the magnificent sum £3000. Moore and Rogers counselled him to deposit the bills in safe hands, without delay. No, no; not at all! he would take them home to Trowbridge "and show them to his son, John. They would hardly believe in his good luck at home if they did not see the bills."

But, though Crabbe remained silent to the public so long, his life and pursuits were poetical. "Out of doors," his son says, "he had always some object in view—a flower, or a pebble, or his note-book in his hand; and in the house, if he was not writing he was reading. He read aloud very often, even when walking, or seated by the side of his wife in the huge old-fashioned one-horse chaise, heavier than a modern chariot, in which they usually were conveyed in their little excursions, and the conduct of which he, from awkwardness and absence of mind, prudently relinquished to my mother on all occasions."

An unfortunate remove was made from Muston to Parham, the former home of his wife. In this small Suffolk town she had been brought up in the home of her uncle Tovell, a jolly and wealthy yeoman, who had acquired some gentlemanly dignity and consideration. The poet, upon the death of this old gentleman, put a curate in his place at Muston and went to reside in the Tovell house. "The house was large, and the surrounding moat, the rookery, ancient dovecote and the well-stored fishponds were such as might have suited a gentleman's seat of some consequence. . . . On entering the house there was nothing at first sight to remind one of the farm; a spacious hall paved with black and white marble, at one extremity a very handsome drawing room and at the other a fine old staircase of black oak, polished till it was as slippery as ice, and having a chime clock and a barrel organ on its landing places." But he did not find the comfort he anticipated, and long regretted his choice. "It was a desertion of his proper flock and duty in obedience to his own private inclinations, and it was not blessed." The day they quitted Muston, as they rode slowly out of town, behind a load of their furniture, some one who knew them called in out a solemnly impressive manner, "You are wrong, you are wrong!" The sound stung him and awoke an accusing conscience. "You are wrong!" sounded in his thought, as if spoken by a supernatural voice, through all their journey.

Until forbearance ceased to be virtue. After putting up with the old maid humors and fidgety ways at a Towel sister, resident in the house; who would threaten whenever anything was done that did not suit her, to "make a cadacy," to her will; Crabbe made another remove. This time it was to Great Glemham hall, while just at hand was the village of Swell where he drew large congregations, and had an admiring friend in his rector, Mr. Turner. Great Glemham was the property of a Mr. North, and became the poet's residence for five of his most satisfactory years. "The house was large and handsome. It stood in a small but well-wooded park occupying the mouth of a glen; and in this glen lay the mansion. The hills that were on either hand were finely hung with wood; a brook ran at the foot of one of these, and all around were woodlands, and these green dry lanes which tempt the walker in all weathers, especially in the evenings, when in the short grass of the dry sandy banks, lies, every few yards, a glow worm, and the nightingales are pouring forth their melody in every direction. In such a place, too, a paradise to his boys, he was as busy in botany as ever; wrote a treatise on the subject, which, however, he was advised, to the public loss, not to publish, because such books had usually been published in Latin! He therefore burnt it as he used to do novels, which it was his great delight to write scores of, and then make bonfires of; his boys' carrying them out to him by armfuls in the garden, and glorying in the blaze as he presided over it.

What remains must be condensed in a few paragraphs. His removal from the

*Codice.

beautiful retreat of Glemham, in 1805 to Rendham, in Suffolk, and his resumption, with many annoyances and cares of his old charge at Muston, which was neglected and run down; the suspicion in which he was held, and the shyness of the farming-folk, who had now come under the influence of dissenting ministers; and the absurd stories put into circulation about him. Crabbe a Jacobin! and Wordsworth a Jacobin, forsooth! But what will not prejudice affirm? But these nine troubled, busy years, in the cold, clayey farm country were practically rich, for here the "The Borough" and "The Parish Register" were produced; and here his beloved wife, long an invalid, died. No wonder, it under the pressure, he threatened to give way; no wonder if his spirits failed him and health declined; no wonder if he saddened at the sight of all around him, and longed for a change of scene.

This came in June, 1814, when the Duke of Rutland bestowed upon him the living of Throbridge, in Wilts Co., adjoined to which was the smaller living of Croton Kerrial, in Leicestershire, and where his remaining years were serenely spent, in the genial fulfilment of benevolent social and religious duties. It was one of the places the outward features of which are not prepossessing, but which nevertheless contain in seclusion the characteristics that win and satisfy the heart. Crabbe made many friends among the kindly, intelligent people of Throbridge, and here his sons found wives, while his biographer, George, was afterwards found by Howitt, located as a clergyman in the very neighborhood. Here they will point out the quarries where he geologised, long after his botanising habit had been discontinued. From this home he was a frequent visitor at London, in the houses of the literati and nobility. From this home he went, at Scott's invitation to Edinburgh, and saw the Border-Minstrel in his house on Castle street; but, because of George IV's visit at that time, did not get to Abbotsford. He was happy in the smiles and welcomes of men, in places high and low; and rich in the esteem and love of his people, he died at Throbridge in his seventy-eighth year, and was buried in the church of the church, wherein for nineteen years he had ministered, and where his memory was long remembered.

"His parsonage," writes Howitt, was a good spacious old house, of grey stone, with pointed gables, standing in a large garden surrounded by a high wall. It lies almost in the heart of the town, and within a hundred yards of the churchyard. In his time, I understand, the garden was almost a wood of lofty trees. . . . A very civil and intelligent sexton, living by the church yard gate in a cottage overhung with ivy, showed me the church, and appeared much interested in the departed pastor and poet. I ascended into the pulpit, and imagined how often the author of "The Borough" had stood there and addressed his congregation. There is a monument to his memory in the chancel, by Baillie. The old man is represented as lying on his deathbed, by which are two celestial beings, as awaiting his departure. The likeness to Crabbe is said to be excellent. The inscription is as follows:—"Sacred to the memory of the Rev. George Crabbe, L. L. B., who died, Feb. 3rd, 1832, in the 87th year of his age, and the 19th of his services as rector of this parish."

This man of mild speech and benevolent demeanor, but of severe muse, was a lover of the sea, and described it with particular freshness and vigor, it is recorded of him that on one occasion he mounted his horse and took a lonely ride of sixty miles, solely to look upon

"The glittering waters on the shingle rolled," and breathe once more the freshness of that element that had been near to him in all his childhood days. PASTOR FELIX.

USEFUL UNDERSTANDINGS.

How Native Indians Use their Feet as Well as their Hands.

In the native quarters of the towns of India the strange spectacle may be seen of a butcher seizing a piece of meat in his hands and cutting it in two with a stroke of his knife held between the first and second toes of his foot. The shoemaker uses no last, but turns the unfinished shoe with his feet, while his hands are busy shaping it. So the carpenter holds with his great toe the board he is cutting, and the wood turner handles his tools as well with his toes as with his fingers.

This use of the feet to assist the hands in their labor is not, however, the mere result of practice, but is principally due to the fact that the Hindoo foot is quite different from ours in its anatomical conformation.

The ankle of the Hindoo, and the articulation of the back of the foot, permit considerable lateral motion. Then the toes possess a surprising mobility. The great toe can be moved freely in all directions, and the first and second toes are separated by a wide space, sometimes as much as five-eighths of an inch across at the base of the toes and two inches at their extremities.

The articulation of the hip is also peculiar, and this renders it easier to use the toes in handling objects by enabling the Hindoo to sit in a squatting posture much more comfortably than we can.

A similar formation of the feet and toes is found among the Anamese, but it is not, as might be supposed, a common thing among barbarous and savage tribes.

One naturally thinks of the resemblance to a monkey which a human being using both feet and hands in the manner described above must present, and yet M. Regnaud is careful to point out the fact that the Hindoo foot is not at all like the foot of an ape or monkey. The great toe is not opposed to the other toes like the thumb, as occurs with the monkey, and accordingly the pedal dexterity of the Hindoos is not to be taken as an indication of simian descent.

Wigs were probably invented about the time of the first Roman emperor, for we are told that Otto had a scalp of fine leather with locks of hair upon it so well arranged as to seem natural. When wigs were introduced into England the clergy inveighed against them as being indecent and unnatural, and even cut their own hair shorter to express their abhorrence of the fashion.

EASTER IN OLDEN DAYS.

HOW THE FESTIVAL HAS BEEN KEPT IN MANY LANDS.

Its Origin Is Very Remote—Rejoicing Over Advent of Spring—Quaint Customs—How Good Clothes and Fancy Clothes Found Place in the Festival.

The word Easter is derived from Eastre, Eostre, or Ostara, as the Anglo-Saxon goddess of spring was variously known. In the days when all good things—and all bad things, too, for that matter—were supposed to be the work of this or that goddess, it was but natural that such a delightful thing as the disappearance of grim winter and the appearance of joyous spring should be celebrated by a thanks offering to the personification of the balmy spring-tide. Even our rugged Anglo-Saxon ancestors were not proof against this sentiment, and the advent of Easter, or Eastre, was annually made the occasion of a great festival. Hence our word Easter, and in a measure perhaps, our Easter festival, commemorative though it is of the resurrection of Christ.

The French call the festival Pasques; the Italians, Pasqua; the Spanish, Pascua; the Greeks, Pascha—all of these terms being derived from the Hebrew Pesach, meaning Passover. Among the Jews the Passover has for centuries been most religiously observed, Passover week beginning on March 14 and ending March 21. Consequently the Jewish Christians fell into the habit of celebrating Easter on March 21, irrespective of the day of the week.

The early Christians did not observe Easter, and it was not until the fifth or sixth century of the Christian era that the observance of the day became general. The council of Nice, in 325 A.D., ruled that the day must be observed on the first Sunday of the first full moon after March 21, and to the See of Alexandria, in Egypt, was given the duty of yearly promulgating the proper date of the celebration. There was much confusion, however, among the different churches in regard to the time of holding the festival, owing largely to the rivalries and animosities of the various sects. About the eighth century all the Western churches came to an agreement on the subject, and thenceforth celebrated the festival on the same day, but the Eastern churches persisted in reckoning by the old calendar and observed Easter a fortnight later. The Greek, Russian and Oriental churches have held to this custom even to the present time.

Tardily recognized though it was the Easter festival, duly established, at once took and has since held a prominent place in the Christian calendar. The early fathers emphasized the importance of its observance by their writings and sermons. In the year 367 A.D. the Emperor Valentinian I. decreed that on Easter day all prisoners not guilty of heinous offences should be liberated, and the same practice was followed by a number of his successors. On Easter eve all the churches of the East were illuminated until daybreak and in various other ways the joyous significance of the festival was made manifest in the observance of the day.

In olden times, each of the three days immediately preceding Easter Sunday was observed with rites and ceremonies peculiar to it. Thursday of Holy Week was variously known as "Maundy Thursday" and "Share Thursday" and was a day for giving alms to the poor. The Maund, or charity bread, was then distributed to the poor who flocked to the churches to receive it. The rich and powerful also humbled themselves on this day by washing the feet of the poor in commemoration of Christ's humility in washing the feet of his disciples. Kings, queens, and emperors were accustomed to perform this humble service for deserving paupers. Hence mentions one occasion on which Queen Elizabeth washed the feet of thirty-nine poor women, this number representing the years of her majesty's age. Nowadays, women of much humbler rank than Elizabeth would probably shrink from thus openly declaring their ages, even though they could bring themselves to perform the ceremony itself, but Queen Bess had no alternative, vain though she was, as her years were a matter of well known record.

The ceremony, as described by the various historians, was an elaborate one, and was followed by the presentation of many and valuable gifts to the paupers whose feet were bathed by royal hands. Other monarchs of England were sufficiently swayed by the religious custom of the time to perform the feet washing service for the indigent, but with the death of James II. the practice died out forever, so far as English royalty was concerned.

Thursday of Holy Week was also observed in divers other singular ways, one of which was the shearing of the heads of the faithful. An ancient authority tells us "in old Fathers' days the people would then shere their hedges and clypp their herdes and pool their heedes and so make them honest against Easter day." Thus came the name of Shere Thursday.

Good Friday, or Passion Day, the culminating day of Lent, was so vigorously observed that total abstinence from food for the twenty-four hours was commonly practiced, and even now strict ritualists take on this day but little sustenance save bread and water at morning and night, fasting throughout the remainder of the day. Attendance at divine service is insisted on by strict churchmen, and it has been always the custom in England and her colonies to regard Good Friday as a public holy day. The custom of baking "Holy Cross" buns on Good Friday is an old one. These buns were formerly like the paschal bread, unleavened. They are, even to this day, marked across the top with the form of the cross, and displayed in the baker's and pastry cook's windows.

Easter Eve is in some parts called "Holy Saturday." On the evening of this day it was the custom to make preparations for the coming feast, and in Ireland the midnight hour was saluted in every house with a great clapping of hands, accompanied by the utterance of a Gaelic phrase signifying "out with Lent." The vigil ended with much merriment. Did one of the merry-makers allow his appetite to tempt him to

partake of food before cock-crow, it was superstitiously believed that dire misfortune would come upon him.

Not the least remarkable of the old time Easter customs was the unwritten law which made it incumbent upon all good citizens to, if possible, appear in new raiment on "the glorious Easter morn." If financial difficulties made this step impossible, those so situated were expected to observe the day by at least wearing a new coat, new hat or something or other purchased in honor of the occasion. Here again we have proof of that rather trite remark of Solomon's to the effect that there is nothing new under the sun, for does not every woman of spirit in our own day feel it her bounden duty to appear in a new bonnet, if not an entirely new costume, on Easter Sunday? In Poor Robin, the ancient custom responsible for this modern law of fashion is referred to thus:

At Easter let your clothes be new,
Or else be sure you will rue.
Barnes the Dorsetshire poet, puts the following words into the mouth of one of his rustics:

Last Easter I put on my blue
Frock coat the first time, vier new;
Wi' yaller buttons aad o' brass,
That glittered in the sun like glass;
Bekaze 'twas Easter Sunday.

The lavish decoration of places of worship with flowers was a feature of Easter Day observance centuries ago. White flowers, typical of purity, have always been the favorite Easter flowers. The lily is widely recognized as the emblem of the Resurrection, and the Passion flower, a species of aster of pale purple hue, has also come into general use in Easter decorations.

Our forefathers prolonged the Easter festival so as to include the following week thus making the celebration include fifteen days. The week beginning with Easter Sunday was given up to sports, games and other species of merry-making. An odd feature of the old time celebration was that of heaving or lifting, the "heaved" sitting in a chair decorated with white ribbons. Easter Monday and Easter Thursday were known as heaving days, the women sitting in a chair on Monday and the men on Tuesday. Those heaving or lifting the chair, were expected to lift it three times and then kiss the occupant, who in turn kissed them. To the regret of the lads and lassies in the districts where the novel ceremony was once performed, the custom has long since died out.

On Easter Tuesdays it was the privilege of the men to beat their wives, who repaid the compliment in kind on the morrow. This ceremony, as far as can be learned, was not provocative of lawsuits or separations, and was, no doubt, a mere lighthearted castigation. Young couples also amused themselves by rolling down hill locked in one another's arms. The significance of this old custom is not apparent. Hand ball was one of the most common Easter games. A sort of water tilting contest was much in vogue, young men in boats without oars drifting against a shield suspended in midstream and striking at it with a lance. If the lance was broken against the shield it was considered a good stroke and won applause, but if the shield was missed or the spear remained intact the owner of the lance invariably lost his balance and tumbled into the water. No serious consequences followed such a mishap, however, as a boat was held ready to pick up the unlucky tilter. This sport was varied by suspending a bag of sand from the end of a swivel pole as a mark for "tilters" on horseback. The contestants would ride furiously and prod the bag and then attempt to dodge it on its return. If they did not they were apt to be well thumped for their pains. The bitter herb—tansy—was used in a symbolic way at Easter and sports were instituted in its honor. A "tansy cake" was often the prize at a hand ball match or foot race. This was often frosted and adorned with some fanciful device.

Eggs have been associated with the celebration of Easter for many hundred years, but their emblematic use is as old as the beginning of history. The ancient Egyptians held them sacred as an emblem of the renewal of the human race after the Deluge. The Jews also used them as an emblem of the Resurrection. In the north of England it has for a long time been the custom to send presents of eggs at Easter to intimate acquaintance. These "pace eggs" are usually decorated in colors and were often inscribed with the names of the giver and recipient. They were sometimes elaborately decorated with scrolls by a pen-knife. This custom of sending to acquaintances colored eggs at Easter has become quite common of late in this country. These eggs are not infrequently mounted in silk or on panels and decorated with ribbons or painted with flowers or landscapes, in water colors. The eating of eggs at Easter as at the Passover was at one time a part of the ritual of this day. The inhabitants of Persia and Mesopotamia have a custom of coloring eggs red, signifying the shedding of blood, and presenting them to relatives and friends. The Siberians have the same custom with many elaborate and interesting ceremonies added.

Easter has been celebrated by some of the noblest inspirations of sacred poetry. No less than Christmas, it stirs the imaginative faculty of the soul, and truly the mystery and sublimity of the Resurrection is a theme to dignify any poet's pen. The genius of Giles Fletcher has flooded it with the light of religious thought and colored it with feeling. Martin Luther, Bernard of Clairvaux and many a minor singer of England and Germany have embalmied in reverent and beautiful verse the festival at once emblematic of physical and spiritual regeneration.

The Easter Kiss in Russia.

The kiss plays an important part in the Easter ceremonies of Russia. During the great festival of the church, from the highest to the lowest, the Easter kiss is given and received. "Christ is risen," says one; "He is indeed," replies the other; and a mutual embrace follows. The Czar salutes his family, his retinue, the members of his court, and his personal attendants. The general kisses the officers of his corps, and the colonel those of his regiment; a master embraces his servants. Even a beggar proffering the salutation of "Christ is risen" to some high-born dame would receive the usual response, but the kiss would probably be commuted for some small piece of money.

Some men are so constituted that they cannot enjoy a pleasant day because they are afraid the morrow will be disagreeable.

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